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EK, NI  
SUBJECT: NIGERIA TO EXTEND EXCLUSIVE ECONOMIC ZONE, NO  
INFRINGEMENT ON NEIGHBORS

REF: ABUJA 1184

¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY: According to October 10 press reports, President Yar'Adua has ordered the National Boundary Commission (NBC) to "ensure the extension of Nigeria's continental shelf beyond the present 200 nautical mile limit." The GON believes this move will not/not upset relations with Nigeria's neighbors. NBC Assistant Director Abdul-Aziz Bello confirmed to Poloff that the GON has done the requisite seafloor studies and is indeed planning on submitting a request to the United Nations Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf (UNCLOS) for recognition of an extended Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) boundary sometime in 2009. Bello said the exact limits of the new request have not yet been determined, but will not extend to the 350 nautical mile (nm) limit established by UNCLOS, and claimed that this extension will not infringe on any other nation's EEZ. Ministry of Foreign Affairs Director for East and Central Africa Tony Eze told Poloff that any extension would be in a southwesterly direction, away from Cameroon, and Head of Corporate and Public Affairs for the Nigeria-Sao Tome Joint Development Authority Sam Dimka said that the GON had too much at stake in the Joint Development Zone to upset the apple cart. It will likely be years before any decision is handed down on the proposed expansion. An increase in its EEZ would only further tax the Nigerian Navy, which is already spread thin and incapable of protecting ships and oil platforms in Nigeria's waters. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (SBU) October 10 press articles reported that President Yar'Adua has ordered the NBC to expand Nigeria's maritime economic boundaries, saying that "the successful conclusion of this exercise will no doubt increase the frontiers of our national sovereignty and boost our national resource base." In an October 16 meeting with Poloff, NBC Assistant Director Bello confirmed that Yar'Adua had given the order, but also said that this had been in the works since at least 2002. He said all the scientific studies had been completed in conjunction with the Navy's Hydrographic Office, boasting that "we've gone very far beyond other African nations" in asserting national sovereignty and achieving scientific goals. He believed the formal application for expansion would be filed with the UN in early 2009, but did not know how far beyond 200 nm Nigeria would seek. When asked if the expansion would infringe on the EEZ of any neighboring country, Bello sketched a rough map of Nigeria's coastline to

illustrate the kind of limits off the Niger Delta he was describing, enlarging in a southwesterly direction. He said the only maritime boundary issues Nigeria currently had with any other nation is an eight nm stretch disputed by Ghana. (Note: On October 17 and October 29, respectively, a political officer and the Defense Attaché from the Ghanaian High Commission told Poloff they were not aware of said dispute. End note.) Bello concluded the discussion by expressing his confidence that "we'll definitely get something beyond 200 nm."

¶3. (SBU) Tony Eze, the MFA's Director for East and Central Africa, affirmed to Poloff on October 22 that any expansion of the EEZ would not come at the cost of antagonizing Cameroon, and that it would expand to the southwest, away from Cameroon -- likely expanding just a portion of the current maritime economic boundary, rather than the entire length. Per the provisions of the 1913 Anglo-German Treaty reaffirmed in the Greentree Agreement, Nigeria's maritime boundaries with Cameroon are settled. He also said it would not affect the Nigeria/Sao Tome Joint Development Zone created in 2001 and renegotiated in 2003. When Poloff pointed out the difficulty the Nigerian Navy would have in trying to protect additional offshore oil and gas facilities from militants, Eze conceded its near-impossibility and mentioned the hope that the Gulf of Guinea Commission would in the near future be harnessing support for the "Gulf of Guinea Guards," an arrangement in which regional nations would provide maritime security, presumably with support from international partners.

ABUJA 00002131 002 OF 002

¶4. (SBU) On October 24, Eze's views were echoed to Poloff by Sam Dimka, Head of Corporate and Public Affairs for the Nigeria-Sao Tome Joint Development Authority, who emphasized Nigeria's contentment with its present maritime boundaries with its neighbors, and highlighted the unlikelihood that Nigeria would seek to renegotiate or jeopardize the Joint Development Zone (JDZ) it shares with Sao Tome and Principe. Recalling the years of talks that led to the establishment of the 34,500 square km JDZ, which is both politically and economically advantageous to Nigeria, he pointed out that U.S. firms hold 75% of the zone's equities -- one more reason for Nigeria not to trouble the waters. By his reckoning, the expansion would run parallel to the JDZ, adding a wedge-shaped area to the existing EEZ that would stop short of invasion of the EEZs of Nigeria's neighbors to the west.

¶5. (SBU) COMMENT: One of the apparent results of having finally settled the Bakassi issue is that Nigeria, feeling it came out the loser on the matter, is pushing outward in other directions. While Nigeria's neighbors might disagree with its claims, the application process is expensive and technically challenging, and will thus take some time. New Zealand's recent successful claim was the result of more than ten years' work and cost \$44 million, and UNCLOS took more than two years to adjudicate the claim. Along with Nigeria, many other nations are expected to file claims before the May 13, 2009 deadline. Even assuming Nigeria's submission to the Commission is adequate, it will likely be years before any result is handed down. Furthermore, Nigeria's Navy is unable to protect Nigeria's existing offshore oil and gas facilities; increasing the EEZ by thousands of square nautical miles will also increase the number of targets available to militants (reftel). END COMMENT.

¶6. (U) This cable was coordinated with Consulate Lagos.  
Sanders